Patent Application of

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for

TITLE: Anti-terrorist Network Hardcopy Mail Scanning and Remote Viewing System and Process

BACKGROUND FIELD OF INVENTION

This invention relates to insulating a hardcopy mail recipient from receiving unwanted mail articles. More specifically, a mail scanning and digital image storing process is disclosed wherein a scanning service computer sends digital images of an intended mail recipient's hardcopy mail to the intended recipient's computer. Said scanning service computer and said intended mail recipient's computer being interconnected by a computer network. The intended mail recipient views images of his mail remotely via his computer and sends signals via computer electing which pieces to receive and which pieces to discard. The scanning service computer receives the intended recipient's elections. The scanning service mails the hardcopy mail for which acceptance has been indicated and discards mail for which rejection has been indicated. The intended recipient can also instruct (via computer) the scanning service to open and scan (capture the image of) the contents of a particular mail piece. This process enables a mail recipient to further pre-select which mail he wishes to receive and which he wishes to discard. By discarding unwanted mail in advance of actual receipt, this process reduces an intended mail recipient's potential exposure to explosives, biological agents, and chemical agents that terrorists may attempt to distribute to the intended recipient through the US and international postal systems.

BACKGROUND-DESCRIPTION OF PRIOR INVENTION

The US postal system was one of the earliest institutions established in the young United States of America as an open means of communication between vast numbers of mail senders and mail receives. The US postal system has served the US well and has been emulated in many other countries. Unfortunately, in recent years, terrorists have used our postal system to distribute exploding letters, anthrax, and other biological and chemical agents with the intention of harming mail recipients. Presently, recipients are warned to exercise caution when opening and handling mail. Some precautions include, don't open mail from an unknown recipient or mail which has wires in it,

for example. These instructions provide some useful benefit but little comfort to mail recipients. A primary exposure still exists for the recipient who physically filters through potential mail hazards. Namely, a chemical or biological agent could potentially be on the outside of the envelope. While the prior art does not provide a means for individual mail recipients to filter out unwanted mail (such as mail from unknown origins) prior to actually physically receiving it, the present invention provides a digital image means to achieve this object.

Capturing and distributing digital images has been brought to a fine art in recent decades. Likewise high speed mail handling, metering, routing and distribution equipment has been well known and widely used for decades. The process for automatically digitizing the image of a hardcopy mail article and sending the image to the article's intended recipient via networked computers and enabling the user to select whether or not to receive the mail article without having physically handled the article has not been anticipated in the prior art. The present invention discloses this novel and unanticipated process and system.

SUMMARY

This invention relates to insulating a hardcopy mail recipient from receiving unwanted mail articles. More specifically, a mail scanning and digital image storing process is disclosed wherein a scanning service computer sends digital images of an intended mail recipient's mail to the intended recipient's computer. Said scanning service computer and said intended mail recipient's computer being interconnected by a computer network. The intended mail recipient views images of his mail remotely via his computer and sends signals via computer electing which pieces to receive and which pieces to discard. The scanning service computer receives the intended recipient's elections. The scanning service mails the hardcopy mail for which acceptance has been indicated and discards mail for which rejection has been indicated. The intended recipient can also instruct (via computer) the scanning service to open and scan (capture the image of) the contents of a particular mail piece. This process enables a mail recipient to pre-select which mail he wishes to receive and which he wishes to discard. By discarding unwanted mail in advance of actual receipt, this process reduces an intended mail recipient's potential exposure to explosives, biological agents, and chemical agents that terrorists may attempt to distribute to the intended recipient through the US and international postal systems.

Objects and Advantages

Accordingly, several objects and advantages of the present invention are apparent. It is an object of the present invention to provide a means for intended hardcopy mail recipients to select which mail articles they wish to receive and which they wish to discard without their having to physically handle articles. It is an object of the present invention to thereby dramatically reduce an intended mail recipient's potential exposure to terrorist weapons such as explosives, biological agents, and chemical agents. It is an advantage of the present invention that a service is provided to digitally record the image of the intended recipient's mail. It is an advantage that the image is sent from said service's computer to said intended recipient's computer via a network. It is an advantage that said recipient can decide which mail to receive and which mail to discard based upon the digital images. It is an advantage that the user's computer sends elections to the scanning service's computer via a network such that the scanning service can exercise the intended recipient's elections. It is an advantage that the scanning service sends only the hardcopy mail wanted by the intended recipient. It is an advantage of the present invention that unwanted mail is discarded by the scanning service prior to ever being received by its intended recipient. Thus the object of minimizing unwanted mail and minimizing concomitant potential for terrorist exposures are dramatically achieved by the present invention.

DRAWING FIGURES

Figure 1 prior art is a flowchart describing the typical home hardcopy mail stream in the US.

Figure 2 prior art is a flowchart describing the typical office hardcopy mail stream in the US.

Figure 3 is a flowchart describing hardcopy mail interception at the home mailbox.

Figure 4 is a flowchart describing hardcopy mail scanning via a service address.

Figure 5 is a flowchart describing hardcopy mail scanning performed by the US Postal Service.

Figure 6 is a flowchart describing hardcopy mail scanning performed by an office mail processing system.

Figure 7 illustrates the computers interconnected by network.

Figure 8 is a flowchart illustrating hardcopy mail flow integrated with the computers interconnected by network.

Figure 9 illustrates the GUI with an image received by the intended hardcopy recipient.